Dried Fruit Market in Europe

survey in six countries finds outlook dim for immediate recovery of prewar level of United States exports

H. R. Wellman

Prospects for large commercial exports of dried fruit from the United States to Western Europe are not bright so long as dollars remain scarce.

A survey of the markets for United States dried fruits in Belgium, France, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and Western Germany produced these general findings:

1. Consumers' demand for dried fruits in the six countries combined is at least as large as before World War II.

2. There is a strong preference in Western Europe for United States dried deciduous tree fruits, but not for United States raisins.

3. Dried fruits are considered a luxury by most European governments.

Consumers' Demand

The finding on the demand of European consumers is based upon the following evidence: Belgian imports of dried fruit, in the absence of special restrictions, averaged 30% higher in 1946–49 than in 1934–38. Swedish imports of dried fruit in 1946 and 1947, before tight controls were imposed, averaged nearly 40% higher than in 1934–38. In the United Kingdom and France average annual consumption of dried fruit was higher in the postwar than in the prewar period, despite a forced shift in the composition of the total supplies occasioned by government restrictions on imports from the United States.

A part of the increase in European consumers' demand for dried fruit following World War II was the result of temporary factors. Food supplies generally were acutely short, and virtually all foods found eager buyers. Consumers had gone without their accustomed amounts of dried fruit for several years.

Some of Europe's increased demand for dried fruit appears to stem from population growth and a rise in average per capita real income. Between 1938 and 1949 population increases were: France, 1%; Belgium, 3%; United Kingdom, 6%; Sweden, 11%; Netherlands, 14%; and Western Germany, 20%. Average per capita real income was substantially higher in the United Kingdom and Sweden in 1950 than before the war; in Belgium, France, and Netherlands it was as high or slightly higher; in Western Germany it was still below the prewar level. For the six countries combined, real income per capita averaged somewhat higher in 1950 than in 1938, and virtually all of the gain accrued to the lower income classes.

The favorable effects of population growth and improved real income on the demand for dried fruit were partly offset by increased domestic production of fresh deciduous fruit and by some shift in consumers' demand from dried fruit to fresh citrus fruit.

The second general finding, on European preferences, is based on the following observations:

In the European importing countries, dried apricots from the United States regularly outsell by a wide margin those from Spain and Iran. European importers turn to these other sources of dried apricot supplies only when their government does not permit buying from the United States or when the price of the United States product is too high. Consumer and trade preference for United States dried apricots over those produced elsewhere results from their brighter appearance, large size, sweeter taste, and uniformity of packs.

United States dried prunes, too, command a large premium in most countries of Western Europe. The principal exceptions are France and Western Germany.

In Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom there is virtually no competition to United States dried prunes. Before the war almost all imports came from the United States. Since the war, these countries have turned to dried prunes from other sources only to a very limited extent, even when imports from the United States were sharply curtailed or entirely cut off. The greater appeal of United States dried prunes over Balkan dried prunes among the consumers of the four countries arises mainly from their sweeter taste, larger size, tenderness, and uniformity of packs.

In France, domestically produced dried prunes will offer substantial competition to United States dried prunes if and when that market is reopened. French prune production has almost doubled since 1934–38, and now equals about 40% of that country's prewar consumption. Largely because of inferior processing, French dried prunes are not as palatable as United States dried prunes for eating out of hand or for use in pastry, and they require more cooking in making compote. Nevertheless, they would likely replace an equal quantity of United States dried prunes, if they were priced moderately below the United States product.

German consumers prefer Balkan dried prunes over those from the United States. They like the flavor of the dried prunes produced in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and do not greatly discount small sizes. The advantages of the United States prunes in their greater uniformity of quality and pack and longer storage life are barely, if at all, sufficient to offset the taste preference for the Balkan prunes. German importers claim that United States prunes must be priced as low as, or slightly lower than, Balkan prunes to find any considerable market in Western Germany, provided deliveries of Balkan prunes come up to their prewar standard.

United States raisins meet keen competition in all western European markets. No substantial preference for raisins produced in the United States over those produced elsewhere was found in any of the six countries surveyed. These markets readily take Australian, Turkish and Iranian raisins. Premiums and discounts

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The Fern Mite

a newly recognized pest on California ferns readily controlled by treatment with proper chemicals

A. Earl Pritchard

The fern mite—*Hemitarsonemus tepidariorum* (Warburton)—is now known to be a pest of ferns in California. It was originally found damaging brake or *Pteris* ferns in England in 1904, and scientists later recognized it feeding on holly or *Polystichium* ferns in Minnesota in 1929. Its occurrence in commercial greenhouses in the San Francisco Bay region was recently established. Growers report, however, that its damage has been known to them for many years.

The fern mite feeds on both types of ferns in California, and is particularly injurious to *Pteris Alexandrae, P. argyraea, P. Mayii, P. Ouvardii, P. Parkeri, P. Victoriae, P. Wilsonii,* and *P. Wimsettii.* Others such as Boston, Maidenhair, bird's nest, and tree ferns are not subject to its attack.

The fern mite is closely related to the broad mite—*Hemitarsonemus latus* (Banks)—and its habits are similar. It feeds generally on the underside of the fronds causing brownish areas to appear. Feeding on the tender new growth causes the fronds to become wrinkled and misshapen. The egg is elliptical, white, with tiny, frosted spots—much smaller than those on the broad mite egg.

Experimental work indicated that the fern mite—like the broad mite—may easily be controlled with sulfur. Certain of the newer acaricides were also tested against the mite—88R at a rate of one pound of the 15% wettable powder per 100 gallons of water; parathion at a rate of three-fifths pound of the 25% wettable powder per 100 gallons of water; toxaphene at a rate of 1½ pounds actual toxaphene in emulsion form per 100 gallons of water, and American Cyanamid-4049—an experimental material that is not commercially available—at a rate of 2½ pounds of 25% wettable powder per 100 gallons of water. All of these materials gave excellent control of active stages, but only the toxaphene spray eliminated the infestation. No damage to brake or holly ferns was noted with any of the treatments except possibly on tips heavily infested by mites.

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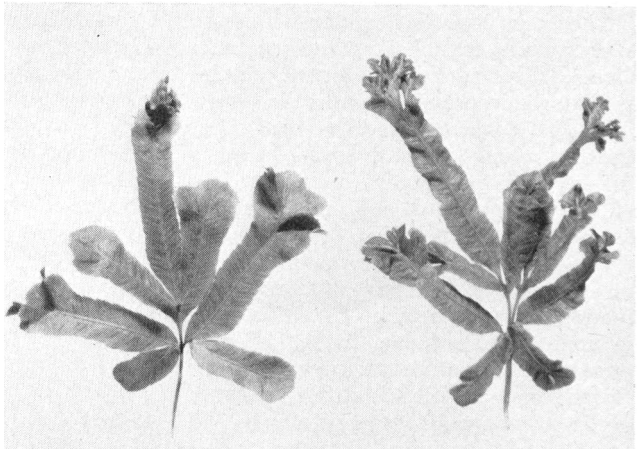

***Pteris* fern — nearly normal frond on the left and on the right a frond infested with fern mite.**

MARKET

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are related mainly to grades and packs rather than to country of origin. Buyers shift quickly from United States raisins to others or the other way around, depending on which price is lowest.

In the European markets currants are important competitors of raisins, especially in the bakery trade. Commercial bakeries substitute currants for raisins when the price of currants is relatively lower than the price of raisins. Western European imports of currants come mainly from Greece.

The finding that dried fruits are considered a luxury by most European governments is based on statements of government officials and dried fruit importers, as well as on actions of the governments.

Among the six countries surveyed, Belgium alone has during the postwar period permitted relatively unrestricted importation of dried fruit from the United States. The other governments have exercised tight controls over the kinds and amounts of dried fruit imports. Neither France nor the Netherlands have thus far granted any dollars for the purchase of dried fruit, and in 1948 both Sweden and the United Kingdom closed their markets entirely to United States dried fruit.

While some of the countries, particularly Sweden and the United Kingdom, stepped up their imports of dried fruit from the United States after the institution of the Economic Co-operation Administration, they did not permit the entry of a sufficient quantity to fill the demand of consumers. They could have used more of the dollars available to them for the purchase of dried fruits, but they chose instead to import other goods. Dried fruit stood low on the list of desired imports.

Shipments of United States prunes and raisins to Western Europe in 1949–50 were stimulated also by the direct payment of export subsidies. These subsidized exports enabled European countries to obtain large amounts of prunes and raisins for relatively few dollars.

No evidence was found that the European governments would soon change their classification of dried fruit from the luxury to the essential list. United States exports of dried fruit to Western Europe will likely continue to be limited until those countries acquire sufficient dollars to adopt a policy permitting unrestricted imports of virtually all goods and services of United States origin.

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